

A1.1

Inclusion at the University of Worcester



Design inclusively Being inclusive in Designing and Planning Teaching and Learning Activities

What?

Anticipate diversity.

How?

Try to think through each of your activities and your overall outcomes from the perspective of students from diverse backgrounds with a range of learning needs.

Why?

This reduces the need to make individual adjustments for students, and increases overall student satisfaction.

Know your students.

Get to know the backgrounds and interests of your students to inform the activities you choose.

Activities and materials that are culturally and personally relevant are likely to be more engaging and likely to promote deeper understanding.

Carry out a skills audit.

Consider doing a skills audit to find out your students' learning needs, and remember that some international students may be learning the course material alongside developing their English language skills.

Knowledge about levels of numerical skill and ICT proficiency as well as your students' proficiency in written English, can help you to avoid making assumptions, and ensure students are supported to develop the skills they need.¹

Check assumptions about prior learning.

Don't assume prior knowledge of what you think students should know, unless it's something you have covered previously. Be aware of knowledge that is implicit within your subject, and make this more explicit where needed. Provide additional study materials or references to help student plug gaps.

Students will have a variety of prior educational, cultural and social backgrounds and may not all be at the same starting point.



What?

Make materials available in advance.

How?

This helps students to be mentally prepared for new learning.² Some students will struggle to read quickly in the session, which will exacerbate anxiety and reduce opportunities for full engagement. Students with SpLDs may prefer to print off materials in advance rather than reading them from a screen.

Why?

Students learn at different paces and student abilities vary. Students who do not have English as a first language may want to review lecture material beforehand, for example. Use the VLE to prepare flipped learning (<https://flippedlearning.org/definition-of-flipped-learning/>) material in advance of lectures.

Link learning.

Ensure that students know how any newly presented content links to previous knowledge. Recap on what you have covered in a session.

This will help to further embed the knowledge and give students a deeper understanding of the whole context. It is particularly important for some students on the autism spectrum or with specific learning difficulties (SpLDs).

Vary learning activities.

Consider interactive, visual, auditory and kinesthetic materials and activities. Don't assume that all students will learn from materials in the same way.

Your student body will include learners with a variety of learning needs and preferences.³

Make learning active.

Design learning activities which enable students to discuss, share, explore and apply their understanding and skills, especially in relation to linking theory and practice and applying learning to real world problems. Avoid learning activities where students are simply passive recipients of information.

Students learn more effectively when they are engaged in actively applying their learning, and linking theory to practice.⁴ This also helps them to recognise the provisional and contested nature of much knowledge and understanding in higher education, drawing on a range of perspectives.

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What?

Make your Blackboard site easy to navigate.

How?

Ensure your Blackboard site makes use of the built-in organisational features and that it is easy for students to locate and find the materials they need. Keep it up to date. Get feedback from students on this and ask them to suggest improvements and contribute relevant readings and materials. .

Why?

Making sure that your Blackboard site is well used, easy to navigate and up to date will help all students, including those who are looking to challenge themselves, and especially those with disabilities and those who need to spend longer reviewing materials and revising.

Make sure written materials are accessible.

Always use a sans serif font, such as Arial or Verdana, and use 12 point as standard. Avoid densely packed pages of text, and provide plenty of space and numbering to aid navigation around documents. Consider providing off-white paper to reduce the glare of black text on white backgrounds. Refer to the Disability and Dyslexia Service's design and presentation ideas guidance (https://www2.worc.ac.uk/disabilityanddyslexia/documents/Disability_and_Dyslexia_Service_-_design_and_presentation_ideas.pdf).

This means that materials can be accessed by as wide a variety of students as possible with differing learning needs.

Make use of inbuilt accessibility tools.

Always use the inbuilt style (<https://support.office.com/en-us/article/make-your-word-documents-accessible-to-people-with-disabilities-d9bf3683-87ac-47ea-b91a-78dcacb3c66d?ui=en-US&rs=en-US&ad=US>) headings in Word when creating new documents. Ensure materials or websites that you are directing students to are accessible for screen reading software, and all available electronically.

This will enable students with a visual impairment to access the materials without needing to request additional transcription services.



¹ Arkoudis, S. and Tran, L. 2010. Writing Blah, Blah, Blah: Lecturers' approaches and challenges in supporting international students. *International Journal of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education*. 22(2), pp.169-178. [Online]. [Accessed: 10 August 2019]. Available from: <http://www.isetl.org/ijtlhe/pdf/IJTLHE816.pdf>

² Bui, D.C. and McDaniel, M.A. 2015. Enhancing learning during lecture note-taking using outlines and illustrative diagrams. *Journal of Applied Research in Memory and Cognition*. 4(2), pp.129-135. <http://psycnet.apa.org/doi/10.1016/j.jarmac.2015.03.002>

³ Grace, S. and Gravestock, P. 2009. *Inclusion and Diversity: Addressing the needs of all students*. New York, NY; London: Routledge.

⁴ Biggs, J. 2003. *Teaching for quality learning*. 2nd Edition. Buckingham: Society for Research into Higher Education and Open University Press

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<https://inclusiveteaching.leeds.ac.uk/>; <https://www.plymouth.ac.uk/your-university/teaching-and-learning/inclusivity>.

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